326 In addition, each year the blacksmiths join together and offer a
778 sacrifice on the communal anvil. All tools are placed around it,
796 overflowed with the blood of the victims.

An annual ceremony which also brings the craftsmen together has the purpose of asking Faro to help in the cooling of the wrought iron and to give the water into which the iron is dipped the strength to fulfill its function. Assembled before the kotigi's forge, they bring a certain number of tomatoes which are first presented to the altar, then to the ancestral axe farakun, on which each one in turn licks with his tongue.

Keeping their mouths closed so as not to let the strength thus gathered escape, they all walk toward the river, while one of the
[534 participants strikes up, on the ritual bell (nege dɛ̃) with a lump of
533] (nege dyun), the rhythm called klide fo (literally, rhythm of the sons of the testicles) (1) addressed to the one-arm blacksmith, the

1. Kli dɛ̃, "son of the testicle," is one of the ritual jokes addressed to the blacksmiths by their senãnku. [522]

bolokuruni, Faro's companion. Once on the bank, the kotigi undresses and throws himself into the water. When re reappears on the surface, all the participants open their hands the better to seize the strength of Faro and his companion, which the man is supposed to bring back. They rush to help him dress and the one who succeeds in touching him believes he receives Faro's special favors.

The tomatoes are then squashed into a gourd and the pulp is thrown into the river at a deep spot where each participant draws water and drinks to communicate with Faro. The group then returns, bringing back in the gourd a little water into which each one dips his individual axe, starting with the patriarch who, at the end of the ceremony, drinks up the rest.

326 If a woman is sterile, she asks the help of the three spirits protect-
778 ing the forge as they have the reputation of being very prolific.
842 Without her presence, the blacksmith crouches before the altar with his hands spread out, his head lowered, and prays. The woman must then swear to respect scrupulously the taboo of the invoked spirits, which is to pronounce their name. She may also ask the blacksmith to implore the help of the ritual ashes of the altar.

794 796 201 The rituals in which the mask participates generally /161/ take place the following night in a thicket called komo tu, "bushy one of the Komo," situated in the bush near the village.

As soon as they hear the mask whistling, the members approach according to their age grades, the older ones first. In principle, only those under the jurisdiction of the functioning Komo and their guests are present. However, any initiated stranger who wishes to attend the dances makes his status known by means of the following signs:

1. Shouting "hé" or "ho," he presents his right hand to the mask with all the fingers folded except the index and the little finger which point towards it. The index, in this case, represents the circumcised man, member of the Komo society, in sum, the petitioner. The little finger, which is smaller, expresses this man's submission to the Komo and the fact that he is and will always remain its inferior.

2. He puts a twig of straw in his mouth; the light colored straw signifies that his heart is pure, that he has no evil intention. The mouth, closed over the straw, shows that the man, "understanding the word of the Komo," has no need to speak of it.

3. On his arrival, he says: ani bara (literally, I am with the bara). The masker, hearing these words, crouches and then straightens up suddenly before the newcomer as though to frighten him. The latter then says: "I am a new child of the society" (1). When he is accepted,

1. Ne ye timidɛ̃ kura ye.

the masker resumes the dance and the ceremony continues.

794 796 533 The rhythms of the Komo bear the general name of komo bara or komo foli dunu (literally, rhythm of the Komo drums) (2). They are

2. The word bara is reserved for the rhythms of the masked Komo dances. The rhythms of the profane dances of the elders are called mabere fo, those of the young men, bɔ̃dyala, those of the girls, kofili.

numerous, adapted to the rituals they accompany, each endowed with a separate name. The Bambara classify them into three categories: the rapid, violent, and difficult rhythms performed against the non-initiates; the soft rhythms for circumcision; the sad rhythms for funerals.

794 During the masked dances, once the drummers have begun the
796 rhythm of the Komo, they must neither slow down nor cease their
533 playing; otherwise the masker will rush at the player and threaten him with his left hook. In this case, the musician changes the rhythm in order to soothe the masker and sings: "You, old men, you are with the bara; listen, this bara is not empty." (1).

1. Aw ni bara makorabaw; klo madyo,
nin bara te bara lãkulo ye.

794 /162/ The masker participates in the ceremony not only by dancing
796 and by uttering cries, whose pitch and intensity vary according to
198 the action which he is preparing or performing.

A guttural and very muffled cry (buâ, buâ, buâ) called komo suruku (literally, hyena of the Komo) is used to frighten the participants.

A shrill and short cry (pyę, pyę, pyę) called kono fari kasi (literally, cry of the bad bird) is frequently used to animate the dance and amuse the spectators.

A long and softer cry (ô-ô, ô, ô, the last three ô's being very close together) called morokorobaw kasi (literally, cry of the ancestors) greets the chief and his age grade.

794 During the mask dance, the Komo's griot encourages it by reciting
796 the devices which exalt its power, authority, and judicial powers:

"You, Komo, you griot of the Komo, you, ringer of the bell, from whom do you come? You come from Makanta Djigui. You, bad Komo, from whom do you come? You come from Soma Moriba. To whom did this one give it? He gave it to the sons of the blacksmiths. Who are the owners of the Komo? Makanta Djigui, Soma Moriba, the sons of the blacksmiths. These have not known shame; you must not be ashamed. These have not received humiliations; you must not be humiliated.

"You, little living Komo, enemy of non-members, friend of members, take your enemy's heart, take his liver. I follow behind you and not before you. Ah! Komo; you, killer of the fat dead ones, shroud of those living, act upon him who provokes you as you do upon him who does not provoke you" (2).

2. E komo, e dyeli, e ndara kolo fo,
e bwora dyeni ma, e bwora makanta

791 The box is transpierced by two wooden sticks, če kala (literally,
534 man-stalk), recalling the two millet stalks which accompany every dead man into his grave and which are in themselves symbols of the two elders.

791 When the Soma falls ill, he removes the two sticks from his instru-
534 ment and places them beside him on his mat, anticipating the position
755 he will lie in the grave. Thus stretched out, "he is in the grave and walks with the two ancestors"; if his condition improves the sticks have liberated him from his illness. He replaces them in the harp only after his recovery.

791 The box contains seven pebbles, the number of man (3 + 4) and a
534 piece of copper in the shape of a star symbolizing the word. The Soma may look into the harp through an opening on its side, called šu wo (sorcery hole) or bara dinge (hole of the box), which "permits him to breathe," to see "the ancestor Koumabana, master of the word, and to know the deepest secrets." At the bottom of the instrument another opening, considered the anus, permits the release of all that is harmful.

/224/ A red stain placed on one of the faces, sindera ble (literally, red belt), expresses the fact that the instrument is the object of blood sacrifices like the stone jineworo.

The case is the image, the mask of Koumabana; the two faces, called respectively kini nye, "right eye," and numa nye, "left eye," represent his eyes; the comb, his mouth; the opening, his nose and respiration; the strings, his words. It is also the replica of the tomb and of the first three of the eight ancestors who knew death. Finally, it is the face of the Soma and his tomb.

The instrument must never be touched by a woman; moreover, no one must play it if his intentions are not pure, "if his heart is not clean."

791 When the Soma plays in response to requests from those who consult
533 him, each sound is a prayer. With his free hand he holds a twig with
781 which he strikes the base. Each stroke is a word. As he plays, images form before his eyes and within him. He touches the cords separately according to their position and in relation to the importance of the question that is being asked. Thus, he pinches modẽ for subjects of little importance: hunt, journey, etc.; fadẽ for that which is concerned with health, procreation, the physical or moral life of the individual; fa for the future, destiny, the private and public life of a man, his

791 authority, his command; fa koroke for planting and cultivation, the
533 control of water, rains, and ponds, and for fortune and wealth; fa
787 dogone for the germination of grains, the formation of the ears and the light rains; ba for all that concerns women; faso for all that concerns the family house and those who are absent.

But the Soma also plays airs with rhythms accompanied by words. He plays them one after the other during the sitting or choses them according to the character of the person consulting him and the questions raised.

The following seven songs were collected and interpreted by the Soma of Bandiagara:

"A good thing comes with a bad thing" (1). This song has the

1. Ko ñumã de bina ni ko dyugu ye.

effect of revealing to the Soma the thoughts of the consulter.

"Man knows little" (2). In spite of his learning a man knows few

2. Adama dɛ̃ te ko do.

things; a child often knows that which an adult ignores.

/225/ "Even when a man is satiated he may not go beyond the mother who has given him birth" (3). This rhythm is performed for

3. Mako fara čokočoko a tise ka temme a wolo ba ka.

those who show arrogance or vanity, or for those whose wife has left the conjugal home and has taken refuge with her father.

"Even if he is handsome, a man must have eyes (that is, to be informed)" (4). The Soma plays this air whenever there is a marriage,

4. Moko čɛ kani čokočoko fo nɛ̃ ka soro i ku.

a birth, or an initiation.

"The world is big" (5). When anguish overwhelms the consulter,

5. Difĩ ka bõ.

791 this song calms his restlessness and gives him back peace and serenity.
533 "Whatever man is, he may not go beyond God" (1). The Soma
787

1. Moko a kera čokočoko a te teme ngala ka.

plays this air if the consulter harbors bad intentions or if he is ignorant or stubborn. He does the same to discover the gifts of a child and to encourage the family to develop his learning.

"Joy embellishes the world" (2) is performed for futile and pleasant

2. Klo ye dĩne dya.

things: feasts and dances, ornaments.

787 Divination, in a large measure, is the application of the static
801 and dynamic quality of numbers. On the one hand these translate the relationships; on the other, they are symbols for phenomena, beings, behaviors, situations, and in general all the constituent parts of the universe. Though not endowed with power in themselves, they symbolize powerful and well regulated elements. It may also be said that the numbers are superior realities, the same as the primordial signs which preceded the perceptibility of all things and on account of which the things began to exist once man had taken them into his consciousness. (3)

3. See p. 17.

In the course of divination, they indicate to the individual or collective consulter his personal position with regard to the rest of the universe. In a way, they permit the formulation of a particular equation for each person at a given time.

CONCLUSION

121 /227/ It is only recently that the discipline of silence adhered to by the Blacks has been relaxed in certain circles of the initiates. Human behavior, backed up by a rigorous method, has allowed a group of researchers to establish a documentation which suffers less from the usual faults. It is no longer superficial or fragmentary; it is

764 The provisional master takes his place at the door or inside the blon', the vestibule of the house, and receives the condolences. [166]

Several days elapse between death and burial in order to give distant or absent relatives time to arrive. During this period the funeral songs become more and more elaborate and [533] are left to professional singers who are accompanied by various instruments: tom-toms, xylophones (bala), guitars. The singers, dancers, and mourners exert themselves all the more if they think there will be substantial rewards.

The children of the house (den'-u, de-u) are allowed a good deal of freedom during this period, as though the authority which had curbed them had ended with the life of the deceased. They are allowed to take hens and goats, to eat lavishly, sing, dance, and generally rejoice.

On the night preceding the burial, the deceased is placed outside under a shelter (gwa); the songs and dances [857] continue. It is customary for the children (de-u) of the house, led by the professional members of the funeral orchestra, to take part in the singing and dancing.

Relatives, friends, neighbors, and persons obligated to the family are expected to bring offerings in proportion to their rank or indebtedness so as to contribute to the meals and to [689] the funeral alms. This is a very strict obligation; any failure to comply not only shows a lack of respect for the dead, but is also an offense which the family must avenge. The chronicle of Ségou bears witness to this fact.

763 764 Along with the religious ceremonies, events of an entirely different nature take place. If the death should seem in any way suspicious, it is the duty of the family to investigate the matter without delay. It is particularly the heir presumptive, if he is present, who is required to take steps at once to clarify the matter; he questions the ancestors and consults seers and magicians. The funeral ceremonies are sometimes dominated and even conditioned by the results of these investigations and consultations. At the very least, it would be essential to obtain the lifting of the interdict imposed on the

585 The well-known cry of the wara-mina-den' of the fiancé's brotherhood is heard at various points along the way; the god is watching over his disciple's fiancée and chasing evil spirits from her path.

When they approach the fiancé's village, the young men go to the head of the procession, while the fiancée's companions take their places behind her. The whole troop begins to dance to the rhythm of the drums and trumpets. The women seem to hold back and take a long time to reach the entrance to the village a few hundred meters away.

At this moment, the wara-mina-den' utters a loud and final cry; his mission is accomplished.

The women of the village welcome the newcomers and lead the girl to her husband's house. Other women join the procession. Several groups of singers are formed, and the dancers proceed slowly to the couple's house. There, in an inner court, the crowd settles down; everyone drinks, eats, dances, or sings as the spirit moves him.

The dressing of the bride begins as soon as she arrives. Her hair is taken down; the string and the beads she wears about her hips are removed; and she is helped with her bath. Then, wrapped in a white skirt cloth, she lies down on the nuptial couch.

Her husband joins her after escaping from his roistering friends.

At daybreak there is a sudden shot. Loud and frequent shouts of "kuyo! kuyo!" rise above singing [203] and the noise of an orchestra. The old women burst into the nuptial hut, carrying warm water for the ablutions. The husband comes out and goes off to sit on a mat in the courtyard with the furu-bolo-ma-tigi and his friends.

The bride appears wrapped in her marriage skirt; behind her the old women wave a piece of linen that gives visible evidence [533] of the accomplishment of intercourse, and dyeli-moso (griot [Ed., feminine]) sing of love. The young girls who accompanied the bride surround her at the exit from the courtyard and lead her to a hut arranged so that she may rest there. For eight days she has all her meals there, and seated on a mat, with a white veil on her head, she spends the days spinning with her companions.

585 The husband spends the whole day after the wedding night in his hut, where relatives, friends, and neighbors come to congratulate him and present minor gifts of food. He invites them to eat and drink. The wedding is thus prolonged for several days, depending on the husband's wealth, during which time the couple is at the disposal of the guests.

[556] Rich families like to show off the trousseau, jewels, and gifts bestowed on the bride, so during the whole day after the wedding night everything is paraded with great pomp through the village by people of caste who proclaim the items and exaggerate their value. Toward evening the presents are shown one last time to the bride, who sits on a low bench with her face hidden behind a kind of tray, woven with grass, which she holds in her hand. [533] Drums and other instruments make a great uproar, while a female griot, standing behind the bride, sings love songs. Everyone [302] admires the bride's hair, which is artistically braided in a flat crest with two small braids on each side of the face hanging in front and behind the ears. The women finger her jewels as they admire them and her thick-soled sandals.

To conclude the ceremony, the furu-bolo-ma-tigi gives cowries to the leader of the singing, and guns are fired for the [481] last time. Then the bride gets up, glides over the ground without lifting her feet, and enters the hut with her companions, while the guests retire. [204]

Second Marriage

595 The number of wives is limited only by the necessity of providing each one with a suitable living. This means that, theoretically, polygamy is a privilege of the rich. Some men practice it in order to pass as rich men, which flatters their pride, while others use it to gratify a sensual temperament. Most often, however, people in modest circumstances have several wives solely for economic reasons.

When an only wife has young children and no servant to help her, she is extremely overworked. When this is the case,

881 freshly shaved (4), their bodies rubbed with vegetable butter
[302]

4. Just as their heads were shaved at birth.

(si tlu), [242] arrive in single file. Greeted by the onlookers, they take their places in the front row. Shouts, noisy conversation, and songs are intermingled and make a racket which is interrupted by the arrival of the "girls of the soli" (soli-ma-moso-u). With their hair in a tangle and dressed in short skirts (1)

1. Blue for Moslems and yellowish-brown (basa) for the purely pagan Bambara.

reaching from the navel to the knee, they enter one behind the other, walk around the assemblage, and finally take their places in a group near their mothers and friends.

The assembled men drink around the fires.

881 All the drums are there, and as soon as the girls appear,
● 533 the drummers rush to their instruments. There are big drums
534 resting on three legs (denu-ba), others which hang from the shoulder, and still others carried under the arm. Young women shake bits of iron (kinge) as one shakes castanets, and there are other iron instruments provided with rings. Old women pound on gourds turned upside down in pots filled with water.

The noise is deafening, and it is dominated by songs in honor of the ancestors shouted by the whole assemblage as loudly as possible. Then the whole crowd, where the tipsy are in the majority and where everyone is at the highest possible pitch of excitement, starts a frenzied dance accompanied by songs usually improvised.

881 While all this is going on, the adepts of the major
789 brotherhood (2) are outside the village, noisily driving out the

2. The Komo around Ségou; the Nama in the Kaarta area.

248 into narrow bands by weavers [men] who make clothes from it in.
286 unbleached, indigo-blue, yellow, or black fabrics. At the present time, after numerous attempts at improvement since the occupation,
[654] seeds selected according to the zones of cultivation are distributed to the farmers, and the administration encourages industrial cotton cultivation in irrigated regions, as well as mechanical spinning and weaving.

248 Sisal is an agave of Mexican origin. The long, thick, pointed
[177] leaves, after undergoing a series of industrial operations including mechanical extraction of the fibers, yields very strong textile fibers suitable for cordage, rope making, rug manufacture, canopies, etc.

Kapok (Eriodendron anfractuosum) until a few years ago was merely gathered, but now plantations have been created. The fruit is in the form of capsules containing seeds enveloped in a vegetal wadding. In one year the kapok tree can furnish 30 kilograms of fibers used in mattress-making, hat-making ...

D. Agricultural Tools

24 Bambara farming tools are very simple. The hoe is almost the only agricultural instrument used. There are several kinds of hoe, particularly in the Bougouni region: the tyerengu, 0.50 meters wide, with a straight handle (chiefly used by the Sénoufo); the n'gu kala, 0.30 meters wide, with a curved handle. These two are used for digging, scraping, and banking. The flotton, from 0.10 to 0.20 meters wide and with a handle made from a forked branch, is used for the second dressing of the earth and for weeding. (When the weeds are too big, the weeding is done by hand). These hoes oblige the peasant to work stopped over. Let us also mention the axe, dyeli, which serves to cut shrubs and the branches of trees in clearing land, the machete, and a small pickaxe with a hoe handle, the yalo.

[33] Millet spikes are harvested with the aid of a special small knife to cut the stalk into pieces. Finally, the threshing of the ears is done with large bent sticks having round handles and flat ends.

[533] Agricultural labors, tillage and threshing, are undertaken
[461] collectively following the cadence indicated by an instrumentalist. Work in the fields is generally done by starting at the bottom of a slope and working up, so the rain will wash off the weeds. The

326 as well as of silver, on a wooden core. The thrones of the ancient [531] Bambara chiefs were covered in this manner. Today the golden ornaments are no longer reserved exclusively for the wives of kings. [301] Bracelets, pendants, and necklaces are produced in large quantities in a filigree work in which the Black excels.

B. Ceramics

323 The land is very rich in pottery, but Bambara men do not model clay, pottery being a woman's art. Inversely, the women do not work on statuary.

C. Painting

531 386 The Bambara paint murals on the sanctuary walls with ocher and a millet paste. The priests make these drawings periodically. The walls of the young people's huts are also decorated with symbolic motifs: calabash spoons, festoons, ladders with 22 bars, drawings of hands, lines of chevrons. The young girls come to paint these, [237] with clay from the river or with a mixture of clay and cow dung. All these geometric drawings are signs representing not only the cosmogony, but a subtle translation of all the movements of the executing artist's soul. They are a veritable form of writing.

D. Music

533 771 Music is a privileged art (1) because it is bound to instru-

1. Griaule, Passim, "Symbole des arts africains" [Symbol of the African Arts], Présence africaine.

ments, that is to say, to materials, to the human body by the voice and the dance, to numbers by the rhythm, to medicine, to divination, and to religion.

534 771 [106] In a report to the French Institute of Anthropology on February 18, 1948, Mme. G. Dieterlen described the structure and symbolism of the two Bambara musical instruments, the Sema guitar and the royal drum.

534 787 asks: modè (grandson) for unimportant subjects, hunting, voyages; fadè (son of the father) for individual life, physical and moral; fa (father) for the future, destiny, the public life of a man, his authority, his rule; fakoroke (father's older brother) for the plantings, the rains, for fortune; fa dogone (father's younger brother) for germination of the cereals; ba (mother) for everything concerning the women; [107] faso (father's house) for everything concerning the familial abode or the absent.

534 The principal efficacy of the harp is in bringing order, by the rhythms and sounds emanating from it, to all that is troubled in the march of events.

The harp presides at sacrifices, at cathartic or medical rites, at purifications, at apotropaic rites, at solitary meditations. Its high notes are celestial and symbolic of completeness; the low notes connote terrestrial things and incompleteness. Its playing commands arrivals and departures, proliferations and diminutions, calls to order; its presence at the edge of a pool, where it had been silently placed, is assurance of appeasement.

The harpist, before beginning his service, puts his mouth to [788] the orifice in the frame and murmurs to the master of the Word: "Now it is your turn, organize the world." (1)

1. Passim, Griaule, "Symbole des arts africains" [Symbol of the Africain Arts].

533 534 Music, dance, and song are intimately linked in the religious movement. Thus it is that a djo of the Samakè (Bougouni circle) is composed entirely of musicians who form an orchestra in which the whole scale is represented by eight different principal instruments, which are types of a multitude of others. There is one n'ganian-ba, an instrument made by hollowing out a trough in a tree trunk, which gives a very deep sound when rubbed; it is the bass which gives the cadence. Two to three tiorõ give a sharper sound; four to six tioun, a still sharper sound, and there are as many as ten fere, the instrument with the sharpest sound. Finally, a host of N'ganian dyeli begin the 533 292 music as the griot quiets the crowd at the start. All these instruments have the form of a pirogue. In addition, the orchestra includes two singers and two dancers. Everyone wears masks, bonnets with crests

533 of black, red, and yellow fibers, clothes of plaited fibers, and the
292 musicians wear a cuirass made of fana seeds (a sort of bean). The bass player wears a band in the back which reaches to his heels and describes a circle when the musician whirls in going from north to south and from east to west to give the cadence. The other musicians form a circle which the dancers and singers do not enter. Another djo is the So, where the musicians and the singers wear masks of wooden horses, except for two clowns who represent the masculine element in the midst of the crowd of young girls. Lastly, the third djo is the djõ buru (buru, "trumpet"). This is the djo of the slaves; they play the ivory horn and are clothed like the N'ganian, but the bass player represents a cow, and the others are the heifers who respond to the cadence indicated to them by their mother.

E. Literature

538 Bambara literature, entirely oral, is extremely rich. It is the monopoly of the griot who from their earliest days learn the stories, the proverbs, the mottoes associated with each [108] family. They recite very long and very numerous epic songs concerning each great family, accompanying themselves on the harp. Certain parts are recited, others are sung in chorus by the griot and his wife. These stories are at the same time historical narratives of heroes' exploits and the mythical history of a demiurge symbolized by the hero. An infinitely small part of these epic songs has been collected. Some Bambara proverbs and stories have been collected by Moussa Traoré in particular.

545 It is interesting to mention another literary production, one
794 in which the creative inspiration of the artist plays a greater part:
522 these are the narratives of the members of the Kworé brotherhood. The Kworéduga are clowns, or rather commedia dell'arte players. One is a Kworéduga by hereditary transmission or by natural bent. During his initiation in the bush, where he submits to ritual harsh treatment, the initiate learns never to lose his temper, no matter what the circumstances. He is taught a comic language, witty sayings. He is trained to observe men's character closely and to recite stanzas and couplets giving his observations.

778 drums and a fairly large number of antelope horns (1). These are tuned
534

1. The old men say that before the Moslem invasion of Omar el Hadj, the musicians blew into elephant tusks. The tusks were confiscated because of the ivory and were replaced by horns of the great antelope, which the Europeans call by the Peul name, koba.

by means of a wooden bell, and each gives a special note and tone.
778 In fact, Bambara music is the sweetest and the least shrill that I have
533 heard. Moreover the Negroes enjoy
534 it; one day at Bagini on the Bani, when three such bands gave a concert together, the women were so happy, so pleased and moved by the charm of its sweetness, that they took off their bracelets, earrings, and nose rings and laid them at the feet of the musicians.

Horned iron tube, trumpet of the Komo fetish (seen at Bagini in Bani country at the home of Boya, head owner of the fetish; it is between 0.30 and 0.35 meters long.

The Komo, the Kono, and the Nama have the wildest music there is -- trumpet blasts and frightful bellowings that freeze one with
778 terror. In the Komo music, an iron tube which is part of the fetish
534 is blown into, and the initiates, warada darotigi, accompany the sacred songs on bamboo pipes. The pipes of the Kono are bulls' horns (2), and the sounds that come out of them are real roars. Those of

2. To make these pipes the Negroes cut the tip of the horn and close the opening with a spider's web.

304 seven years and has a strictly religious character (5). The gnéna-

5. This ceremony takes place only once every seven years. The girls are always fairly big when their chests are tattooed.

sonnaba, surrounded by his council, the gouatigi, sacrifices to the dasiri; a hen is offered to the shades of the ancestors, the family boli are /173/ taken out of their dirty skins and sprinkled with blood, and all the village makes merry. People go in procession to the place 304 where the blacksmith tattooer is, and as long as the operation lasts 533 the women clap their hands, marking time for the blacksmith, who sings as he operates, and together they join in the chorus.

The tattoo, the chief distinctive mark of the people, is made 304 with a knife having one or two blades. The two-bladed knife cer- 413 tainly makes a tattoo which stands out more and has more detail, but it also requires more skill on the part of the operator, and, doubtless for this reason, it is relatively unusual.

At present a great many Bambara no longer wear the mark of 314 their tribe on their cheeks. The Moslems have contributed greatly to the abolition of this painful practice. Before the arrival of Europeans, under the reigns of Ahmadou and Madani, very severe punishments were inflicted on anyone who tattooed himself or had his children tattooed. One should not think, however, that tattooing was ever a [187] strict and unqualified requirement; in this connection everything is entrusted to the decision of diviners and sorcerers, of djiné, or gnéna, genii, and especially of the family boli, which are consulted and sacrificed to in order to find out whether or not it is necessary to wear the marks of the tribe. Thus it is not unusual to find that some members of a family are tattooed and others are not, and that those who are not tattooed have their children tattooed, while the tattooed refrain from doing so. This ceremony is carried out every seven years, and the head of the family may be away when the blacksmith tattooer comes by, so that the sacrifices do not take place, and the tattooing of the children is put off until seven years later. When they have

881 festival of the sheep كمنش , the little soli girls, those chosen
857 for the next circumcision, go with their still unmarried older sisters
to thank the elders for the honor which has been done them. In the
● [533] evening, at nightfall, they visit the families and in a nasal song
recall the glories of their ancestors. They also have the most flattering
words for those still living, and it all ends with this plea: "We are
soli and haven't a penny! On the tenth day of the next moon we must
offer you a fine "couscous" with very small grains, the basi, and we
want a good sauce. Help us in this, I beg you, we are soli without
a penny."

881 The songs of the soli remind the old men and women of their
857 younger days, the days of their youth, and they run to the granary,
search the gourds that they use as cupboards, unlace the long roll of
481 close-packed straw where the cowrie shells are piled, and the young
people leave triumphantly, rich in cowrie shells, millet, and decayed
fish. The proceeds of the quest are entrusted to the oldest of the
soli, and, on the second day of the festival of the sheep, our belles
gather, grind furiously, and provide the whole village with its ration,
basi kili, which is the name of the festival.

881 On the stroke of noon and even before, everybody is fed and is
eagerly tasting the sorghum /sic/ beer, d'lo, and the soli girls run
from one house to another to gather the leftovers from the feast. They
do it hurriedly, eagerly, and feverishly, for they are impatient to
perform their great religious, public, and solemn act, and at the
soli kili basi they are the cooks and servants of the spirits.

The latter /spirits/ stay at the outskirts of villages, invisible,
and drag the soles of their feet along the paths of yawn as they crouch
/177/ at the crossroads. The songs of happiness, the cries of joy,
the hiccups of the drinkers, and the deafening noise of the bass drums
split their eardrums, the scent of decayed fish swells their nostrils,
and no doubt, between two sighs, as they lick their lips with their
tongues, they say to themselves in a murmur which the wind carries
away: "Oh! the gluttons, they are forgetting us!"

But not at all -- they are remembered! A little soli girl smears
her face, breasts, and back with milk, ashes, also and with other
things whose names I do not know; she makes herself hideous to behold,

881 run, as they have demonstrated under the karité tree), is the part of whole festival which is most reminiscent of a child, and of the function of the circumcision. It is the second birth, and just as the infant appears in public for the first time on the back of her mother, so she again enters the civil and religious life on the back of her mother or of the woman who takes her place.

The excised girls do very little in their huts, and like the boys, they yawn, sleep, and eat. However, they spin a little cotton and very often sing in a low voice while they practice gracefully shaking a gourd the size of a fist, pierced with little holes and filled with small pebbles. They lead a very easy life, and one might think they were happy, but a toothless old woman who is always grumbling watches over them. This is a great nuisance! It is impossible to move, impossible to wiggle a toe; one must have permission for everything, and it is never granted gracefully. The wants of nature must be satisfied in a group and at stated hours.... When the girls go through the village, they lean, in accordance with custom, on a millet stalk at the end of which is hung the perforated gourd in which little pebbles rattle. /182/

514 293

881 533 On the way out as they go into the bush, they sing to the gnâma to protect themselves from them:

Bo n'yé, gnâma, ô gnâma,
Go away from me, gnâma, ô gnâma,
Dankoun ba la,
Of the great corner of land (1),

1. The corner of land formed by two paths that cross, the place where the gnâma dwell. /The slight discrepancy between the translations of the song given here and in Chapter 1, Section 3, is present in the original French. Ed./

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Gnâma fambali, bo n'yé!
Murderer gnâma (who kills), go away from me!

And coming back they sing songs and even improvise some to greet the old and influential men of the village. Back in their huts they kneel on the mat to stretch out or sit down, and there is silence, the silence of schoolgirls which is not broken except in secret, with trembling and in a low voice.

3. The Da Woro Festival, or the Sixth Day Festival

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Boys and girls have paid the tribute of blood to the tribe, five days have already elapsed, and this is the evening before the sixth. Far over there in the west the sun has disappeared behind the heavy baobab trees that border the horizon, myriads of stars twinkle in the sky, and the moon, followed by Venus (Kolo mouso, Niélé, "Niélé, wife of the moon"), traces on a blue background its silver crescent singed with a gold border.

All the paths that lead to the village are full of people walking, seeming like an endless ribbon or a snake that folds back on itself only to stretch out suddenly. Behind the band of young girls walk the women, each with a black cherub on her back that always wakes up to cry and demand the breast; and to them the girls have entrusted their little loincloths, the cloth slings with which they gird themselves for the dance. The girls walk quickly, for although they carry on [482] their heads tall pyramids of gourds held in nets of large mesh, although they carry the fiancé's present to the queen of his heart -- salt; dégé, or millet flour mixed with honey water and milk; d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer; millet and dried fish in which worms crawl; they are confortable in their clothing; /183/ nothing hinders their movements except a narrow cloth band three fingers wide which passes between the legs, is fastened at the waist in front, and waves in back in a limp and soft train. And in the night there is the rustling of dry grass trodden under foot; /there are/ long peals of laughter, light jibes that are well aimed and to the point, and witticisms, for the maiden's tongues have been loosened, and they do not lack wit.

88| healing of their children and their return home. The next morning around the wells one sees only women and young girls with naked torsos washing up in millet in plenty of water; it is to be fermented for the coming drinking bout.

88| And on that day, a little before the sun sets and when it is only
783 a bloody disk, the circumcised and excised young people bring their mats, the gourd disks strung on sticks, the pierced gourds the size of a fist and filled with small pebbles, the millet stalks carried for so long as sticks, and the dirty handkerchiefs that wrapped their heads under the sacred trees, and the gnéna-n-sonnaba, the one who sacrifices to the genii protectors of the village, sets them afire. A black, thick, acrid and loathsome smoke fouls the air, and an uncertain flame of greenish red tries in vain to rise, so choked is it by old dirt and sweat. Boys and girls dart forward and jump three times over this fire of joy. At once they are purified of all their pollution; they have left behind and abandoned the old selves, smoked them out. Agile as deer or
88| gazelles they run to their huts to masiri don ("to make themselves beautiful"). Everywhere there is an indescribable bustle! Lids of gourds, which are the Negroes' cupboards, roll on the ground, split, break, and fall to pieces, and in the midst of laughter of delirious joy there are the lamentations of an old woman who screams and grumbles. This haste and fever is the cause of delays, and the girls especially cannot yet done with arraying themselves. A piece of amber hangs too low or not low enough, the necklaces are too loose and have to be shortened, worn threads break, and beads by handfuls are lost in the dust.

At last, to the great relief of all, the cry of joy "Kouyo ê, Kouyo ê!" rings out from the four corners of the village. Preceded
● [533] by the /195/ chorus of singers (a group of women and girls who clap their hands and sing a most barbaric tune in falsetto, without ever being in harmony), the drums slowly head toward the great trees of the square that is the ballroom. In all the alleys that intersect the village and make it a labyrinth, a crowd of women, men, and children rush, jostle elbows, and shout, and in a moment the square is full.